

Joseph Russell House
118 North Main Street
Providence
Providence County
Rhode Island

HABS No. RI-242

HABS
RI,
4-PROV,
139-

PHOTOGRAPH
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Eastern Office, Design and Construction
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. RI-242

JOSEPH RUSSELL HOUSE

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139-

Street Address: 118 North Main Street, Providence, Providence County,
Rhode Island.

Present Owner
and Occupant: BB Clothing Company.

Present Use: Business building.

Brief Statement
of Significance: This was an early, elegant mansion, but only its
general form and some exterior detail have been
preserved.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

- A. Original and subsequent owners:
Original owners, Joseph and William Russell.
- B. Date of erection: 1772.
- C. Original plans, construction, etc.: The doorway for the house was apparently patterned on Plate 36 of Batty Langley, Builder's Compleat Assistant (London, third edition, 1738). Langley's book was owned by the Providence Library at the time and was listed in their Catalogue of all the Books Belonging to the Providence Library (Providence, 1768).
- D. Notes on alterations and additions: The house survives in a poor state of preservation. The interior finish has been removed, and much of it is now installed in the Brooklyn Museum. The house has been raised one story, and a ground floor of shops inserted under it. There are later additions on the rear and south side. The facade above the later ground floor preserves, in somewhat shabby condition, its original appearance.
- E. Sources of information:
1. John Hutchins Cady, The Civic and Architectural Development of Providence 1636-1950 (Providence, Rhode Island: The Book Shop, 1957), pp. 44, 45.
 2. Antoinette Forrester Downing, Early Homes of Rhode Island (Richmond, Virginia: Garrett and Massie, 1937), pp. 234-239, 244-247, 280.
 3. Henry Russell Hitchcock, Jr., Rhode Island Architecture (Providence: Rhode Island Museum Press, 1939), p. 23, Plate 13.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General statement:

1. Architectural character: This is an early, large, elegant brick mansion. The interiors have been removed to the Brooklyn Museum and the house considerably altered, but the facade preserves its original appearance.
2. Condition of fabric: Fair.

B. Technical description of exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: About 45' (five-bay front) x 36'; three stories, raised on a later ground floor of shops; later additions at the rear; curved bay added later on south.
2. Wall construction: Brick, common bond; projecting brick belt courses between floors, three courses high.
3. Chimneys: Original chimneys removed.
4. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Original doorway in place above later ground-floor entrance, full Corinthian frontispiece with segmental pediment.
 - b. Windows and shutters: Double-hung windows, later two-light sash, simple wood frames, flat arches over openings. Adjustable louvered shutters.
5. Roof: Hip roof with small monitor, rolled roofing. The roof monitor became a common characteristic of Providence houses, and this was one of the earliest.

C. Technical description of interiors:

1. Floor plans: Central-hall plan.
2. Interior finish: Interior finish removed.

D. Site: Surrounded by business buildings, the house faces east.

Prepared by Osmund R. Overby
Yale University
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